

Lugbara language

Lugbara, or **Lugbarati** is the language of the Lugbara people. It is spoken in the West Nile region in northwestern Uganda, as well as the Democratic Republic of the Congo's Orientele Province.^[4]

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Lugbara	
Native to	Uganda, DR Congo
Ethnicity	Lugbara
Native speakers	2,400,000 (2013 DRC Census) ^[1]
Language family	<div>Nilo-Saharan?</div> <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Central Sudanic <ul style="list-style-type: none">Eastern <ul style="list-style-type: none">Moru–Madi <ul style="list-style-type: none">Central <ul style="list-style-type: none">Lugbara</div>
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	Either: <div> <div>lgg – Lugbara</div> <div>snm – Southern Ma'di</div> </div>
Glottolog	l ugb 1240 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/lugb1240) Lugbara ^[2] <div>sout2828 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/sout2828) S. Ma'di^[3]</div>

Classification and dialects

The Aringa language, also known as Low Lugbara, is closely related, and sometimes considered a dialect of Lugbara. If fact, among the Lugbara of Uganda, it is one of the five clans (Ayivu clan, Vurra clan, Terego clan, Maracha clan, and Aringa clan).^[5] Some scholars classify the Lugbara language itself as a dialect of the Ma'di language, though this is not generally accepted.^[6] An SIL survey report concluded that the Okollo, Ogoko, and Rigbo dialects, called "Southern Ma'di", should be classified as dialects of Lugbara.

Orthography

by adima Lugbara was first written by Christian missionaries in 1918, based on the Ayivu dialect. In 2000, a conference was held in the city of Arua in northwestern Uganda regarding the creation of a standardised international orthography for Lugbara.^[7]

In education

In 1992, the Government of Uganda designated it as one of five "languages of wider communication" to be used as the medium of instruction in primary education; however, unlike the other four such languages, it was never actually used in schools.^[7] More recently it was included in the curriculum for some secondary schools in the West Nile region, including St. Joseph's College Ombaci and Muni Girls Secondary School, both in Arua District.

Pronunciation guide

Lugbara phrases are spoken in several dialects (clan-wise) but the Muni (Ayivu) version, from which many of the explanations below are based, is the one approved for teaching in schools. The language has diphthong clusters and other noteworthy phonetics including the following:

aa as in *bat*, for example **embataa**

c as in *church*, for example **Candiru** (which is also spelt Chandiru)

dj as in *jilt*, for example **odji**, the 'd' is silent

ee as in *emblem*, for example **Andree**

gb as in *bend*, for example **gbe**, the 'g' is silent. Gb in Lugbara does not have an equivalent in English. What stands out in these Sudanic languages is the special manner in which 'kp, gb, 'd, 'b, 'y, 'w are pronounced.

i as in *inn*, for example **di-i**

oa as in *oar*, for example **Adroa**

oo as in *old*, for example **ocoo**, less often **oo** as in *food*, for example **'doo**

uu as in *chew*, for example **cuu**

z as in *jean* after **n**, for example **onzi**. Otherwise, most times remains **z** as in *zebra*, for example **Ozu** and when the first letter of a word.

Vocabulary

The Lugbara alphabet has 28 letters minus 'q' and 'x' (Alamakanda in Aringa language), which means 24 like in English and four unique ones namely: 'b like in **'bua**, 'd like in **'dia**, 'w like in **'wara** and 'y like in **'yetaa**. Letters are pronounced as follows: Ah, Ba, Cha, Da, Eh, Fa, Ga, Ha, Ie, Ja, Ka, La, Ma, Na, Oh, Pa, Ra, Sa, Ta, Uuw, Va, Wa, Ya, and Za.

Some words are borrowed from other languages, for example **Safari** (journey) from Swahili, **Buku** (book) from English, **Kandi** (ball) from Lingala, etc.^[8] Also in the vocabulary, there are several words that have varied meanings when pronounced differently, for instance **Oli** can mean air, wind (also **Oliriko**), whistle, cut or roll.

Numbers

Number	Translation
1.	Alu
2.	Iri
3.	Na
4.	Su
5.	Towi/tawu
6.	Azia
7.	Aziri
8.	Aro
9.	Oromi
10.	Mudri
11.	Mudri drini alu
12.	Mudri drini iri
13.	Mudri drini na
20.	Kali iri
21.	Kali iri drini alu
22.	Kali iri drini iri
23.	Kali iri drini na
30.	Kali na
40.	Kali su
100.	Turu alu
200.	Turu iri
300.	Turu na
1,000.	Alifu alu
1M.	Milioni alu

Greetings and other phrases

Lugbara	English
Mi ifu ngoni?	How did you wake up?/ Good morning!
Ngoni?	How are you?
[Ma] Muke!	[I'm] Fine!
Ma azoru!	I'm sick!
Mi aa ngoni?	How did you stay!
Ayiko ni ma fu!	Happiness is killing me!/ I'm happy!
Abiri ni ma fu(fu)!	Hunger is killing me!/ I'm hungry!
Sawa si?	What time is it?
Sawa alu o'bitisi.	7:00 a.M. [To tell time, you mention the number on the opposite side of the clock. Sawa iri is 8 O'clock, Sawa na is 9 O'clock, etc.]
Sawa modri drini alu ondresi	5:00 p.m.
Mi efi!	Come in!
Ife mani 'yi!	Give me water!
Kirikiri!	Please!
Ada!	True!
Inzo!	Lies!
Iko ma aza!	Help me!
Ine!	See!
Mi a'bua ozi si?	How much do you sell bananas?
Ajeni si?	How much [is the price]?
Ale Obangulu!	I want mashed whiteants!
Ma mu Gili Gili-a ngoni?	How do I get to Gili Gili?
Arojo ngoa?	Where is the drugshop/clinic/hospital?
Mi ru adi-i?	What is your name?
Ma ru Joel-i!	I'm called Joel!
Awa'di fo!	Thanks!
Ale mi ra!	I love you!
Ma enga Ombaci-a.	I'm from Ombaci.
Ma mu kanisa-a.	I'm going to church.
Mi ma agi!	You are my friend!
Ma mu Ariwara-a ngoni?	How do I get to Ariwara?
Mosikiti ngwa?	Where is the mosque?
Mi ma ji Ragem-a ra?	Can you take me to Ragem?
Iji ma Ediofe-a!	Take me to Ediofe!
Ba mucele ozi ngwa?	Where is rice sold?

Aje/ andru/ drusi/ drozi	Yesterday, today, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow
Ila muke!	Sleep well!
Ale ra!	I want! [The word 'ra' after a verb denotes positivity.]
Ale ku!	I don't want! [The word 'ku' after a verb denotes negativity.]

Relationships

Grandfather (a'bi,a'bipi)

Grandmother (dede, e'di,e'dapi)

Grandson (mvia)

Granddaughter (zia)

Father (ati, ata)

Mother (andri, andre, ayia)

Husband (agupi)

Wife (oku)

Son (agupiamva, mvi)

Daughter (zamva, zi)

Brother (adrii)

Sister (amvii)

Uncles (atapuru (singular -paternal) atapuruka (plural - paternal), [maternal - adroyi (singular), maternal (plural) - adropi]

Aunts (andrapuruka - plural: paternal and in some cases maternal), (andrapuru: singular), awupi - (singular: maternal aunt), awupika - (plural: maternal aunts)

Cousin (atapurumva)

Cousin brother (atapuruka anzi); also adrii, adripika

Cousin sister (atapuruka ezopi); also amvii, amvupika

NB: Strictly speaking, the word cousin is alien in Lugbara culture. Cousins are brothers and sisters.

Nephews (adro anzi) - maternal nephews

Nieces (adro ezoanzi, ezaapi) - maternal nieces

Father-in-law (anya)

Mother-in-law (edra)

Brother-in-law (otuo)

Sister-in-law (onyere)

Days of the week

1 week (Sabatu alu, sabiti alu)

A day is called **O'du** in Lugbara.

Sunday (Sabatu, sabiti, yinga, yumula)

Monday (O'du alu)

Tuesday (O'du iri)

Wednesday (O'du na)

Thursday (O'du su)

Friday (O'du towi)

Saturday (O'du azia)

Calendar

The simplest way to refer to months (**Mba** in Lugbara) is to use numbers, for example January is Mba Alu, February is Mba Iri, May is Mba Towi and so on. But below is the other Latinized (and seasonal) way of mentioning them.

Januari (Oco 'dupa sere)

Feburili (Kulini)

Marici (Zengulu)

Aprili (Ayi – Wet season)

Mayi (Mayi)

Juni (Emveki)

Julayi (Iri)

Agoslo (Iripaku)

Sebitemba (Lokopere)

Okitoba (Abibi)

Novemba (Waa)

Desemba (Anyu fi kuma)

Common signs

Lugbara	English
Agupi	Men
Oku	Women

Colours

Eka(Ika by terego) (red)

Imve (white)

Imve silili, imve whilili,imve sisirili (very pure white)

Ini (black)

Inibiricici, inicici,inikukuru (very dark)

Emvesi-enisi (black and white)

Foro [foro] (gray)

Foroto (grayish)

Food

Lugbara	English
Mucele	(Rice)
Funo/funyo	(Groundnuts)
Gbanda/Ola	(Cassava)
Osu	(Beans, Kaiko in Terego dialect)
Buruso, burusu	(Guinea peas)
Kaka	(Maize)
Ago	(Pumpkin)
Anyu	(Simsim)
Ondu	(Sorghum)
Maku	(Potatoes)
[M]ayu[ni]	(Yams)
Onya	(White ants)
Ope	(Guinea fowl)
Au	(Chicken)
Eza	(Meat)
Ti eza	(Cow Meat)
E'bi	(Fish)
Kawa	(Coffee)
Majani	(Tea)
I'di	(Porridge)
Kpete	(Beer)

Cikiri/osu nyiri - chick peas

Learning more

To study Lugbara, you might need a language teacher or guide but knowing the pronunciation basics and vocabulary preferably from a dictionary can give you a very good start. Practice by talking to natives physically or online and listening to Lugbara music.

See also

- [Agofe](#)
- [Districts of Uganda](#)
- [Lugbara music](#)
- [Lugbara proverbs](#)

References

1. [Lugbara \(https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/lgg/\)](https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/lgg/) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
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Further reading

- Ongua Iga, Paul (1999). *A Simplified Lugbara-English Dictionary*. Fountain Publishers. ISBN 9970-02-105-2.
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